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INFO RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 4707
RUEHFT/AMCONSUL FRANKFURT 1286

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 000625

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DEPT FOR CA/FPP, CA/OCS/ACS/CI, CA/OCS/ACS/AF

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/19/2017

TAGS: [KFRD](#) [KOCI](#) [CASC](#) [ER](#)

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE ADOPTION FRAUD INVOLVING GSE OFFICIALS

Classified By: CDA Jennifer A. McIntyre, for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (SBU) Summary: An Eritrean-American dual national, Nigisti Teklay, met with Conoff July 13 to request assistance with an alleged fraudulent case of adoption and in obtaining permission from the Government of the State of Eritrea (GSE) to depart the country. Ms. Teklay had recently returned to Asmara with her three adopted Eritrean children and her natural daughter to contest the legality of the children's 2005 adoption in Eritrean court. The women claims she has been trying to nullify the adoption because she had determined, after the adoption, that the children were actually much older than she had been lead to believe and that all three were not, in fact, orphans. She claims that all are actually children of high ranking members of the Eritrean government who committed the fraud to assist their children in evading national service. Ms. Teklay also claims she has been threatened by one of the adopted children's natural fathers and told that she will not be permitted to leave the country without taking the adopted children with her. Post finds many inconsistencies in Ms. Teklay's story and believes she may have been an active participant in a adoption fraud scheme that went bad. Action request provided in para 7. End Summary.

12. (SBU) On July 13, Eritrean-American dual national Teklay, Nigisti Azeb (U.S. PPT # 203524012, DOB 27 APR 1960) told Conoff that she had adopted three Eritrean children in 2005.

At the time, all three children were reportedly in their early-to-mid teens. Conoff has reviewed the case notes which indicate that at the time of the adoption paperwork was presented by Ms. Teklay showing that the children were orphans. The children were processed as IR4 (an immigrant visa for adopted children to have the adoption finalized in the U.S.) and given Longterm Permanent Resident (LPR) status.

Below are their full names, dates of birth, and case numbers in CCD:

Temnewo, Sham Haile
DOB 02 June 1991
ASM2005839001

Temnewo, Yosief Haile
DOB 08 June 1995
ASM2005839002

Temnewo, Merhawi Haile
DOB 15 April 1993
ASM2005839003

13. (C) Ms. Teklay recently brought the three adopted children and her natural daughter to Eritrea under the guise of a vacation, but then attempted to have the adoption overturned

in Eritrean court. Among her complaints were that she was misled about the ages of the children, the oldest of whom was 20 at the time of adoption and therefore ineligible. Ms. Teklay also said she had determined after the children were in the U.S. that they were not in fact orphans. She did not elaborate to Conoff on how she had made these discoveries. Ms. Teklay said that in the court case, the judge had agreed with her claims but refused to issue a ruling to that effect, due to the high status of the natural parents of the children. She added that she was told by some unspecified Eritrean official that she will not be allowed to leave the adopted children in Eritrea, even under the care of her own relatives. Although she offered alternatively to stay in Eritrea with the children, she was ordered to depart Eritrea immediately -- with the children. Ms. Teklay claims that Eritrean national Amanuel Ligam (the man who she believes is one of the children's natural fathers) visited her home and threatened her, saying that &someone will kill you8 if she does not comply. (Note: Ms. Teklay alleges Amanuel Ligam has an influential position in the Eritrean government, although the consular section has not been able to verify where he works. She claims one of the children's natural mothers is Senait Ligam, Director General in the Ministry of Transportation. Post does not know whether the Ligams are married or related. Ms. Teklay was very evasive on questions concerning the natural parents. End Note.)

¶4. (SBU) Ms. Teklay said the three adopted children have not been staying with her since she arrived in Asmara, nor does she know their whereabouts. She has kept their green cards, so the children cannot travel without her. Conoff asked Ms. Teklay to bring the green cards to the consular section to be photocopied. She initially hesitated but agreed. To date, she has not provided them.

¶5. (SBU) During the discussion, Ms. Teklay had trouble remembering simple facts about the children. She could not remember their full names, or even how to spell some of the names she could remember. She was unsure of their dates of birth. She said the adopted children never accepted her family's name, keeping instead their pre-adoption surname. Her own natural daughter informed Conoff in a separate conversation that the three adopted children had caused a great deal of trouble in their home in the U.S. and that the police had been frequently called. Although she didn't show them to Conoff, Ms. Teklay said she had a stack of police reports from the U.S. which she had brought with her for presentation to the court.

¶6. (C) Comment: Post believes it likely that Ms. Teklay became involved in adoption fraud to assist the children in immigrating to the U.S. Eritrea has a mandatory national service requirement beginning at age 17 for both boys and girls that involves intensive military training, and has resulted in many children being hurt, or in some instances killed. Many young people flee across the border to Sudan to escape conscription. While many Eritrean parents attempt adoption or visa fraud to assist their children in leaving the country in order to avoid national service, this is the first case in which post has heard of the alleged involvement of government officials. If Ms. Teklay's facts are even partially true, it appears quite possible that some highly placed members of the Eritrean government convinced (or paid) this woman to adopt their children in order to assist them in immigrating. Now, Ms. Teklay is having second thoughts and trying to get herself out of a sticky situation. End Comment.

¶7. (SBU) Action Request: Post recommends that a lookout be entered on the subjects in this case and if necessary an investigation conducted into revoking the status of the adopted children. Any investigation would have to be conducted from the U.S. due to the near impossibility of TDY personnel obtaining visas to enter Eritrea. Post stands by to assist as necessary with any investigation.

MCINTYRE